

I only want to say one other thing to you. For all the good things that have happened in our country—and I thank Ernie for mentioning them—for all the prosperity we enjoy, we still have many challenges. You know them well enough. You pick up the paper every day, and you know that there are still a lot of trouble spots in this old world. And as soon as we put out one fire, another one crops up. You know that for all of our prosperity, the world financial system is troubled, and you see it in other countries, the problems they're having. And we need to fix it, and I'm working on that.

You know that when all us baby boomers, like me, retire, there will only be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. And that's why I didn't want to spend that surplus until we fix Social Security for the 21st century. And so I say to you that even though we don't have all the answers, we also have to have faith that we can be good citizens. And when we're citizens, we have to realize, number one, we have a moral responsibility to exercise our franchise on November 3d. But we should be voting not just to defeat the people we don't vote for but, in a far larger sense, to find ways to reaffirm our common humanity as children of God. And I want you to think about that.

President Franklin Roosevelt was a deeply religious man. On the day he died, he was working on a speech. And he would get these typewritten speeches that speechwriters would do and then he'd get his ink pen, and he'd scratch through the words and write the words over and write a line here and a line there. This is the last line of the last speech the longest serving President in United States history, and certainly one of the greatest ones, ever wrote: "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with a strong and active faith."

So, your faith is strong. For 160 years, it has been active. You have taken me in and, on occasions, given me the chance to have my inaugural memorial service here in this church—some of the best music I ever heard, some from your choir, and some I brought to you. [Laughter] And every time when I left, I felt like I was 10 feet tall. But you do, too, don't you? And when the choir

was singing, you felt taller, didn't you? And you felt stronger, and your heart was lighter, and so was the load you carried when you came to this dinner tonight.

So again I say to you, happy birthday. Thank you for 160 years of the gift of faith and the energy that flows from it. Be good citizens with your faith. Show up every chance you get. Don't grow weary in doing good. Don't be discouraged when it doesn't work out. And help me every day to convince America that the real victories we have to win are not our victories over one another, but the victories together we win for our common humanity as children of God.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:28 p.m. in the International Ballroom Center at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to event cochairs Ernest Green and Johnnie B. Booker, senior steward board members, and Rev. Dr. Louis-Charles Harvey, senior pastor, Metropolitan AME Church; Presiding Bishop Vinton Anderson, Second Episcopal District, AME Church; Mayor Marion S. Barry, Jr., of Washington, DC; Gwen Ifill, reporter, New York Times; King Hussein I of Jordan; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

October 24, 1998

Good morning. Yesterday, after 9 days of difficult negotiations on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Israeli and Palestinian leaders signed an agreement that restores hope for peace in the Middle East. It strengthens security, increases cooperation against terrorism, and brings both sides closer to the day when they can live together as free people.

Keeping the peace process on track will require continued courage by Israelis and Palestinians in the months ahead. But this agreement shows what is possible when the will for peace is strong. And I'm proud that, together, we were able to make real progress. America will continue to work for a just and lasting peace in this land that is holy for so many people throughout the world.

Now I'd like to talk with you about an historic opportunity we face here at home. Ten days from now the American people will head to the polls for one of the most important elections in recent years. You will help select a Congress that will determine whether we seize this moment of prosperity to save Social Security for the 21st century.

Earlier this month we celebrated America's first budget surplus in 29 years. But even before the black ink was dry, some in Congress were determined to squander our surplus on an unwise election-year tax plan. But we turned back these efforts. The balanced budget I signed this week protects our hard-won surplus until we save Social Security first. As a result, the new Congress will have the best chance ever to ensure that the baby boomers can retire in dignity, without imposing unfair burdens on our children.

As we begin the process of reform, I have proposed five core principles to guide our way: First, we have to reform Social Security in a way that strengthens and protects the system for the 21st century. We simply cannot abandon a program that represents one of our country's greatest successes. Second, we should maintain universality and fairness. Third, Social Security must provide a benefit people can count on, regardless of the ups and downs of the economy or the financial markets. Fourth, Social Security must continue to provide protection for disabled and low-income Americans. And finally, any reforms we adopt must maintain our fiscal discipline.

Today I'm proud to announce the next important step we'll take in putting these principles to work. On December 8th and 9th we'll hold the first-ever White House Conference on Social Security to help pave the way toward a bipartisan solution early next year.

Unfortunately, some in Congress already may be backing away from this historic opportunity. Just last week the Senate majority leader said he may not be willing to join me in our efforts to save Social Security. That would be a grave mistake. As with so many other long-term challenges, if we act now, it will be far, far easier to resolve the problem than if we wait until a crisis is close at hand.

I believe we must save Social Security and do it next year.

I pledge to work with anyone from any party who is serious about this task. We cannot let partisanship derail our best opportunity to strengthen Social Security for the 21st century.

For more than 60 years now, Social Security has formed the sacred bond between the generations. In the words of one elderly woman three generations ago, "It is a precious shield against the terror of penniless, helpless, old age."

If the Congress you elect in 10 days chooses progress, it can strengthen that shield for generations to come. But if it chooses partisanship, this historic opportunity will be lost. You have the power to shape a Congress that will keep our Social Security system as strong for our children as it was for our parents. You have the power to elect a Congress pledged to save Social Security first.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 6:30 p.m. on October 23 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 24. This transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Reception for Congressional Candidate Janice Hahn in Los Angeles, California October 24, 1998

Thank you very much, Roz. I want to begin, I think, by thanking all of you for the raincheck. I'm sorry that I couldn't be here on time, but I'm glad the delay had a happy result.

I want you to see something. See these—normally, when I give a speech I do it from notes like this, which I can't even read now that my eyes are—*[laughter]*—and then before I give a speech, they give me notes like this. And on the last day of the peace talks in Maryland—or however many days it was—until I went to bed last night, I was up for 39 hours, constantly. I didn't even do that in college. *[Laughter]* And so before I got off the plane, even though I did get a little